

“FOR THE RELIEF OF OUR PERSECUTED BRETHREN”:

THE SALZBURGERS AND A FRAGILE PROTESTANT UNITY IN EUROPE AND
GEORGIA

by

MASON ALLEN

(Under the Direction of Michael P. Winship)

ABSTRACT

In sponsoring the migration of Salzburger refugees to James Oglethorpe’s proprietary colony of Georgia in North America, the British government took part in a movement toward ideological unity among Protestants in Europe following the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. The Protestant responses across Europe to the 1731 expulsion of Lutherans from the archbishopric of Salzburg reflect this movement, as the Calvinist kingdom of Prussia and the Anglican British Empire publicly offered to settle the Lutheran exiles in their lands. Throughout the refugee crisis, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in London and its close coordination with prominent German Lutherans in Halle and the young settlement of Ebenezer in Georgia present a telling reflection of an emergent pan-Protestant ethos in Europe, which crossed the Atlantic with its adherents and briefly promised a future for the new colony as a refuge for global Protestants.

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Introduction

Sometime in the spring and summer of 1732, a devoutly Protestant family of Saxon peasants made the half-day trek into town. Word had reached them that a mass of fellow believers, uprooted from their homes, would soon pass through on their journey to a new land. Once they reached town, the spectacle had already ensued. Columns of families dressed in foreign Alpine clothing walked along the road carrying stuffed bags over their backs, their faces riddled with exhaustion after many days on the road. In their wake, peasant families from the countryside and townspeople distributed much needed food and clothing to the exiles. Some opened their windows and tossed coins to the migrants below. Perhaps the exiles prayed with the local congregation for a successful journey in the town's church. The following day, most of the exiles continued their steadfast migration across the vast plains of north-central Europe, carrying the gifts from their generous co-religionists with them. For the majority, their ultimate destination lay to the north and east in Prussian Lithuania. King Friedrich Wilhelm I had generously offered to settle them in the region, where, under the patronage of a Protestant protector, they could begin their lives anew as independent landowners: a promised land.¹ A small minority, however, took up an offer from the British king to settle in the colony of Georgia across the vast Atlantic Ocean. When Reverend Samuel Urlsperger, with the backing of the British government, approached some of the Salzburger to promote the British colony as a

¹ Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 142-143.

refuge for the exiled Lutherans, he inaugurated a unique chapter in the history of European Protestantism and transatlantic migration to North America.

The prelude to this homecoming had been inauspicious and traumatic. On October 31, 1731, Archbishop Leopold Anton Eleutherius von Firmian issued his Edict of Expulsion, “which required all unpropertied Protestants such as tradesmen, servants, and farm laborers to leave the country within eight days.” The edict allowed property owners three months.² The catalyst for this blanket expulsion had been “the discovery that there were nearly 20,000 [Protestants] living in the [remote Alpine] districts of Salzburg.”³ This revelation unsettled the Catholic leadership, and in justifying the edict, Archbishop Firmian’s government cited the Peace of Westphalia, the 1648 settlement that had ended the Thirty Years’ War.⁴ The Peace had merely “encouraged [sovereigns] to display ‘patient toleration’ towards [religious minorities],” while it confirmed their right to expel religious dissidents.⁵ In “declaring the Lutherans rebels intent on overthrowing their archbishop,” and consequently not subject to the Peace of Westphalia’s protections, Salzburg’s Catholic leadership alluded to the persistent shadow of religious violence, exposing a confessional rift in the Holy Roman Empire still fresh from the trauma of war.⁶

An ethos of pan-Protestant solidarity soon swept across central Europe in the wake of the Salzburger’s expulsion. Religious treatises and propaganda likened the pious Salzburger exiles to “the children of Israel on their way out of Egypt.”⁷ The fervor of Protestant evangelists

² George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 7.

³ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 141.

⁴ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 5.

⁵ Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe’s Tragedy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 760.

⁶ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 5.

⁷ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 143.

represented the development of an emergent pan-Protestant ideology in Europe, one that informed the correspondence among Lutheran theologians in central Europe as well as Georgia.

Working closely with the British government and the Trustees for Establishing a Colony in Georgia, Secretary Henry Newman of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and his German affiliates succeeded in convincing a small number of Salzburgers to alter their destination to the British Empire's new colony in North America.⁸ In the wake of one of the most dramatic refugee crises of the eighteenth century, some uprooted victims soon found themselves in a fledgling colony across the Atlantic. From the perspective of the Salzburgers' European origins, the story of their expulsion and subsequent emigration to Georgia reflects not only the persistent juridical legacy of the Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia, but the impact and reach of a new pan-Protestant ideology that thrived in that conflict's aftermath and altered the confessional maps of both central Europe and North America.

⁸ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 9.

Historiography

George Fenwick Jones is perhaps the most well-known scholar of the Salzburger who settled in early Georgia. In their studies of German settlements in North America, scholars often cite his 1984 book, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah*. Jones published a follow-up book nearly a decade later entitled *The Georgia Dutch: From the Rhine and Danube to the Savannah, 1733-1783*, in which he considered the history of most of the German-speaking peoples who settled in colonial Georgia. By modern standards, however, much of Jones's work is anachronistic. In his preface to *The Georgia Dutch*, he even instructs his readers to "read this work as a chronicle, not as an analysis."⁹ As this injunction suggests, the book and its predecessor are filled with valuable source citations and information, but regrettably minimal analysis. This critical component of the historian's craft is often noticeably absent in the two books.

Other works offer more incisive contributions to the historiography. Renate Wilson's 1988 dissertation, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, Agriculture, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia," explores the transatlantic networks that made the Salzburger's community in Ebenezer not only possible, but culturally and politically significant. In comparing the Salzburger's evangelistic missionary activities to those of other groups in North America, such as the English and the Danes, and illuminating the "substantial support...beyond that available to most other Georgia settlers" that the Salzburger received, Wilson makes Ebenezer's unique importance to

⁹ George Fenwick Jones, *The Georgia Dutch: From the Rhine and Danube to the Savannah, 1733-1783* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), ix.

early Georgia evident.¹⁰ Coming a few years after Jones's *The Salzburger Saga*, Wilson's dissertation represents a significant improvement in critical study of the Salzburgers.

Mack Walker's 1992 study *The Salzburg Transaction: Expulsion and Redemption in Eighteenth-Century Germany* focuses on the Salzburgers' expulsion and its political and religious dynamics. Walker argues that "the German Protestant pastorate, more than any other group or agency...seized upon the exile of the Salzburger and made it legendary." The notion of "an essential unity of German Evangelical Christendom" soon became a staple of Protestant rhetoric as a result.¹¹ In turn, W. R. Ward's *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* offers a more expansive analysis of the Protestant revivals across the continent, including those of the Pietists and the Moravians; in this regard, Ward's insights helpfully frame the complexities of pan-Protestantism in the specific case of the Pietist Salzburgers.

In their 1996 paper, "Into Danger but Also Closer to God?: The Salzburgers' Voyage to Georgia, 1733-1734," Dietmar Herz and John David Smith characterized the Salzburgers' transatlantic migration as a religious task and a test of faith. Katherine Carté Engel's more recent 2018 paper, "Connecting Protestants in Britain's Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Empire," emphasizes the roles that the Salzburgers and other groups of Protestants played in creating a unifying ideology of Protestantism across Great Britain's empire. Both studies emphasize the religious nature of the Salzburgers' settlement in Georgia, though in different ways; while Herz and Smith focus on the journey across the Atlantic and the Salzburgers' perception of it as a

¹⁰ Renate Wilson, "Halle and Ebenezer: Pietism, Agriculture, and Commerce in Colonial Georgia," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland (1988), abstract.

¹¹ Mack Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction: Expulsion and Redemption in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 197.

religious undertaking, the Salzburger form only part of Engel's more comprehensive analysis of the British Empire's increasingly global Protestantism.

Aaron Spencer Fogleman also made a valuable contribution to this rich historiography with his 1992 study, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775*. Fogleman notes that "only a small (but significant) minority belonged to some group of radical pietists fleeing extreme religious persecution."¹² Indeed, the unique nature of the Salzburger's persecution and expulsion in the eighteenth century partially accounts for their seismic impact on Protestant ideology in Europe. Fogleman identifies frequent warfare and political instability in central Europe as clear motivations for emigration. He notes that throughout the seventeenth century, "the armies of the great European powers nearly obliterated village after village" in southwestern Germany over the course of the Thirty Years' War as well as dynastic wars later in the century.¹³ While Fogleman's book primarily focuses on the complexities of eighteenth-century migration and patterns of German community settlement in North America as a whole, the study is helpful in revealing the dynamics of German transatlantic immigration.

A year later, in 1993, A. G. Roeber published *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America*, which focused on cultural continuities and reforms in German immigrant communities. Roeber emphasized German conceptions of liberty and property, and how these conceptions differed from those of the British. The explicit association between liberty and property among the British in North America was a foreign concept to the German immigrants settling in the colonies. More still, Roeber argued that the Pietist

¹² Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 43.

movement's emphasis on cultivating one's personal faith and conscience often resulted in a greater willingness among German evangelical communities to reject materialism and "worldly goods."¹⁴ Differences in dialects among various German-speaking peoples from central Europe also led to persistent difficulties in coordination and forming a cohesive German American culture.¹⁵ While Roeber's study is broader in scope than most studies on German immigration to North America, the aforementioned insights can add nuance to considerations of identity in German immigrant communities, including the Salzburger's community at Ebenezer.

Theological disagreements among German Protestant sects are also important to consider. Fogleman's 2007 study *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* addresses the controversies surrounding the Moravian Church in the eighteenth century. Since the Salzburger's who settled in Georgia interacted with Moravians who settled in the colony as well, *Jesus Is Female* is a pertinent contribution to the historiography of German immigration to colonial Georgia. In order to make sense of Pietist leaders' anxieties over the Moravians who settled in and around Savannah, understanding the theological disagreements between the two sects is pivotal. Controversies of Moravian theology, including especially the feminization of the Holy Spirit and even Christ himself, loomed large in the minds of more conservative Protestant theologians like Johann Martin Boltzius in Ebenezer, who at times appeared to question whether the Moravians were even Christians at all.¹⁶ To assess the viability of pan-Protestantism as a unifying ideology among Protestant sects, considering intense doctrinal conflicts such as that between the Salzburger's and Moravians is essential.

¹⁴ A. G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶ Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 78.

Consequently, Fogleman's scholarship on Moravian theology informs integral parts of this narrative.

Regarding early modern pan-Protestantism, Kevin Chovanec's 2017 essay, "The German Liberty in England and the Dutch Republic: On the Pan-Protestant Literary Field and the Circulation of a Loaded Epithet," provides insight into some Protestants' transnational identities in Europe. Chovanec analyzes the remarkably similar responses that eulogizing poets in England, the Dutch Republic, and German-speaking central Europe expressed concerning the legacy of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus and his campaigns across the Holy Roman Empire during the Thirty Years' War. Despite the poets' lack of Swedish national identity, they "imagined themselves as part of the same community," namely "the church, the 'body of Christ.'"¹⁷ Chovanec's research suggests that pan-Protestant sympathies already enjoyed significant currency across Europe during and soon after the Thirty Years' War; thus, his scholarship illuminates a pivotal moment in the development of pan-Protestant tropes.

Peter H. Wilson's *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* is a more expansive history. Originally published in 2009, Wilson's book is a military and political history of the Thirty Years' War that provides crucial background for the confessional politics in central Europe that precipitated the Salzburger's expulsion. Wilson's analysis of the Peace of Westphalia and its impact on the status of religious minorities in the Holy Roman Empire after the war is particularly illuminating and informs much of the analysis of the war's impacts on central Europe.¹⁸ Christopher Clark's 2006 study, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia*,

¹⁷ Kevin Chovanec, "The German Liberty in England and the Dutch Republic: On the Pan-Protestant Literary Field and the Circulation of a Loaded Epithet," *Renaissance Studies* 32, no. 3 (2017): 407.

¹⁸ Wilson, *The Thirty Years War*.

1600-1947, while vast in its chronological scope, also informs much of this analysis, owing to Clark's astute emphasis on Pietism as a unifying force for a nascent, centralizing Prussian state.¹⁹

Recently, Karen Elaine Auman has analyzed the Salzburgers' settlement in Georgia as a reflection of the British Empire's colonial project in North America. Specifically, she has argued that the Salzburgers participated in British imperial expansion, and she especially emphasizes the agency that the Salzburgers exercised in doing so.²⁰ She has also explored the role of Protestant philanthropy in facilitating the Salzburgers' settlement in Georgia, a factor in transatlantic migrations that other early modern historians such as Rosalind J. Beiler have also emphasized. Beiler's 2013 essay, "Information Brokers and Mediators: The Role of Diplomats in the Migration of German-Speaking People, 1709-1711," highlights the diplomatic networks that these philanthropic organizations utilized to great effect.²¹ These networks would prove to be instrumental in the Salzburgers' migration to Georgia.

¹⁹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 134-136.

²⁰ Karen Elaine Auman, "Germans in Georgia: Salzburgers, Protestant Philanthropy, and Empire, 1730-1800," PhD diss. (New York University, 2014), viii.

²¹ Rosalind J. Beiler, "Information Brokers and Mediators: The Role of Diplomats in the Migration of German-Speaking People, 1709-1711," in *A Peculiar Mixture: German-Language Cultures and Identities in Eighteenth-Century North America*, eds. Jan Stievermann and Oliver Scheiding (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013).

The Legacy of the Thirty Years' War

In order to make sense of the religious crisis that erupted in the small archbishopric of Salzburg in 1731, and how some of the exiles later found themselves across the Atlantic in a young and marginal British colony, the overshadowing legacy of the Thirty Years' War in Europe must be understood. Beginning in 1618 with a Bohemian Protestant rebellion against the Holy Roman Emperor, the Thirty Years' War saw Imperial politics, strategic opportunism, and interconfessional animosities feed a lethal war machine in perpetuity. Finally, in 1648, after decades of devastation and millions of deaths, the Peace of Westphalia ended the conflict.²²

For centuries, the Thirty Years' War remained “the benchmark to measure all later wars.”²³ Indeed, most regions of central Europe did not regain their pre-war population levels until the early eighteenth century.²⁴ Stories such as Grimmelshausen's famous *The Adventurous Simplicissimus* included prominent and lurid depictions of wartime violence that would have resonated with readers across the following decades.²⁵ Its legacy persistently haunted the German states of central Europe and their citizens. Meanwhile, the Peace of Westphalia

²² Elaborating on the particulars of the war and its development is not necessary here; for more on the origins and evolution of the conflict, see Wilson's *The Thirty Years War*.

²³ Wilson, *The Thirty Years War*, 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 795.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 819.

established a new status quo across the Holy Roman Empire that would endure until the empire's dissolution in 1806.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Westphalian settlement guided confessional policy within the empire. When issues of religion arose in the Imperial Diet, the Peace stipulated that “two permanent caucuses of Protestant and Catholic representatives, the *corpus evangelicorum* and the *corpus catholicorum*,” would discuss the issues separately, a procedure known as *itio in partes*, or “going into parts.” This mechanism offered the guarantee “that potentially delicate confessional issues could be debated on both sides without unwelcome interference from the other party.”²⁶ Notably, the member states of the Holy Roman Empire invoked the rights of *itio in partes* on merely five occasions after 1648, and the final instance in 1780 proved disruptive enough to suspend the Reichstag's normative business for five years.²⁷

In fact, the Peace of Westphalia did not eradicate sectarian division within the empire; rather, the Peace formalized it. This crucial distinction of the postwar settlement assumes immense importance when interpreting sectarian conflict and rhetoric within the empire over the course of the succeeding eighteenth century. As one of the most widely publicized instances of sectarian persecution in the century of the Enlightenment, the expulsion of the Salzburger exposed the shortcomings of the Peace of Westphalia.

As the early modern historian Peter H. Wilson emphasizes, the Peace “merely obliged [the Habsburgs, the Holy Roman Empire's ruling dynasty,] to respect the Protestant faith of the Lower Austrian nobility, the city of Breslau, and the Silesian princes and their tenants.” In their

²⁶ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 141.

²⁷ Wilson, *The Thirty Years War*, 768-769.

other numerous dominions, “they remained free to suppress Protestant minorities.”²⁸ Such loose restrictions on theocratic governance left Protestants, such as the Lutherans of Salzburg, perennially vulnerable to persecution. Furthermore, the Peace expressly permitted the Habsburg monarchy to continue to promote Roman Catholicism throughout its dominions and to ensure Catholic conformity within its aristocracy.²⁹

By the terms of the Peace, religious toleration throughout the Holy Roman Empire remained remarkably minimal, especially by modern standards. The settlement at least afforded Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists nominal toleration; in reality, however, even congregations of these protected confessions remained at the mercy of their respective sovereigns and their local government’s official theology. Protected religious minorities only “received lesser rights of private worship,” while the terms of the Peace explicitly denied them rights of public worship and procession. The Peace even forbade churches of minority faiths from summoning congregants with the ringing of their church bells.³⁰ In addition, the Peace excluded Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Muslims from toleration entirely.³¹ Occasionally, however, practical concerns (such as the need to repopulate central Europe in the aftermath of war) encouraged moderation, even to the extent that some Jews successfully sued Christians “on the basis of property law.”³²

Even so, Wilson asserts that the primary drawback of the Peace “lay in rooting religious freedom in a web of corporate rights,” which often proved tenuous in moments of heightened

²⁸ Ibid., 759.

²⁹ Ibid., 759.

³⁰ Ibid., 759-760.

³¹ Ibid., 758.

³² Ibid., 761.

sectarian tensions.³³ For many sovereigns, whose authority and legitimacy remained intertwined with their public religious practice and affiliation, the prospect of interconfessional coexistence represented a dangerous subversion of the established order, especially if a minority congregation insisted on a right as radical as public worship.

Outside of legalistic considerations, the Thirty Years' War left its emotive mark on the laity as well. Among Protestants, the fabled heroism of the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus stirred early yearnings for a transnational Protestant community. In Protestant broadsides, treatises, and poems, comparisons of Gustavus to biblical figures abounded. Johann Rist, a German poet, likened Gustavus to Joshua, Moses' successor as leader of the Israelites, and Catholics to the Canaanites, faithless "idolaters" who met swift judgment at the hands of God's Chosen People.³⁴ In explicit terms, much of this early literature reflects "a historiography that effaces nationality and instead divides the world into two parties: the elect and reprobate, God's church and Satan's."³⁵

In addition to this feature of diametric opposition, a Protestant sense of unity was also palpable. After Gustavus's untimely death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632, the English clergyman and poet Robert Gommersall lamented, "a Prince of Israel is fallen."³⁶ The loss of the Swedish king was thus a universal one for the Protestant cause. Indeed, across Europe, Protestants' "religious identity defined both themselves and their literature more than the emerging national traditions."³⁷

³³ Ibid., 762.

³⁴ Chovanec, "The German Liberty in England and the Dutch Republic," 410.

³⁵ Ibid., 411.

³⁶ Ibid., 413.

³⁷ Ibid., 425.

This English memory of the war, and its nearly hagiographic treatment of Gustavus, starkly conflicted with realities on the ground. Gustavus, while tapping into extant pan-Protestant aspirations during the war for strategic gain, had also seldom hesitated to treat Protestant states with severity when it suited him. In 1631, for instance, he had “massed 26,000 men outside Berlin and trained his artillery on the electoral palace” in order to extort contributions from the Protestant elector for his troops.³⁸

Nevertheless, the memory of Gustavus as the savior of Protestantism in Europe endured. This phenomenon of pan-Protestantism, along with the theocratic political structure enshrined in the Peace of Westphalia at the end of the war, would come to crucially define the religious crisis in Salzburg in 1731. More immediately, these developments inspired a Protestant movement in central Europe known as Pietism.

³⁸ Wilson, *The Thirty Years War*, 471.

The Advent of Pietism in Central Europe

The rise of pan-Protestant sympathies in Europe, as well as the Salzburgers' engagement with that phenomenon, owed much to the spread of Pietism in central Europe. Pietism emerged as a radical school of theology within Lutheranism in the final quarter of the seventeenth century. In 1675, Philipp Jakob Spener had published a highly controversial treatise that he entitled *Pious Hopes*, in which he argued that the Lutheran Church “had become so absorbed in the [defense] of doctrinal correctness that it was neglecting the pastoral needs of ordinary Christians.”³⁹ Spener encouraged the establishment of “groups for pious discussion,” which he called “colleges of piety,” that “would transform nominal believers into reborn Christians.”⁴⁰ In 1689, August Hermann Francke became an early adherent of the Pietist movement while studying as a graduate student in theology at the University of Leipzig, even encouraging “some students to burn their textbooks and lecture notes” in a radical act of defiance to Lutheran orthodoxy.⁴¹ In rejecting this orthodoxy, Pietists endeavored to realize Martin Luther's vision of a “priesthood of all believers” and “cherished the *experience* of faith” [emphasis original].⁴² The city of Halle

³⁹ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 124.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 125.

became an epicenter of the revivalist movement, and Francke founded an orphanage and poor children's school there collectively known as the Francke Foundations.⁴³

The officially Calvinist Prussian monarchy soon co-opted the Lutheran Pietist revival, and this development was borne almost entirely of political expediency. By the early eighteenth century, interconfessional disputes among varied Protestant sects had long been a perennial nuisance for the Prussian government. The reality that Brandenburg-Prussia itself remained majority Lutheran compounded this problem, especially since the Prussian monarchy adhered to a minority faith. Spener's emphasis on the unity of the apostolic church, an already familiar notion in Protestant typology, offered an attractive opportunity for Prussia; in aligning itself with Lutheran Pietism and institutionalizing the revivalist movement within the Prussian clerical establishment, the monarchy laid "claim to supreme episcopacy over the two Protestant confessions."⁴⁴ The Prussian government thus sought to resolve lingering doubts among Lutherans regarding the Calvinist monarchy's legitimacy as head of a majority-Lutheran kingdom.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the Lutheran Pietists maintained prominent and influential roles in the Prussian government. In 1691, Spener himself had assumed a senior clerical position at the prestigious *Nikolaikirche* in Berlin, the Prussian capital.⁴⁵ In addition, per the Peace of Westphalia, Prussia had annexed the heavily Lutheran duchy of Magdeburg in 1680 and sought to integrate this "ultra-Lutheran province" into its expanding regional empire.⁴⁶ Pietist theologians had also "provided support in the integration" of the Salzburger refugees in

⁴³ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 127.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 124.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 127.

the early 1730s.⁴⁷ By the turn of the eighteenth century, Brandenburg-Prussia itself had “evolved into a bi-confessional state.”⁴⁸ Thus, Pietism played a central role in the consolidation of the Prussian state.

More broadly, Pietism in the early eighteenth century would come to comprise a “global...communion, [which] included the Salzburger diaspora [as well as] missionaries and believers throughout Europe, America, and Asia.”⁴⁹ The historian Karen Auman has described the British Empire and the global network of Pietists as complementary “pan-Atlantic entities.”⁵⁰ For Protestant visionaries, their faith “transcended kingdoms and empires.”⁵¹ Indeed, Protestants preaching millenarian prophecies of the coming end times often decried sectarian divisions among Protestant sects and denominations, and instead, urged unity among the faithful.⁵² Elizabeth Bouldin has argued that “a shared interest in millenarian and spiritual reform was a driving force behind dissenters’ desire to seek out one another.”⁵³ For instance, the female Pietist leader Johanna Eleonora Merlau frequently corresponded with Quakers such as Jane Leade and William Penn, a collaboration among English and German Protestants that would appear in official government and diplomatic circles in the early eighteenth century.⁵⁴

Controversy often followed these proponents of reform, particularly if they were women. Figures such as Merlau exercised leading roles in the early Pietist movement; for her part,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁹ Karen Auman, “‘English Liberties’ and German Settlers in Colonial America: The Georgia Salzburgers’ Conceptions of Community, 1730-1750,” *Early American Studies* 11, no. 1 (2013): 40.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁵¹ Ibid., 50.

⁵² Elizabeth Bouldin, “In Search of ‘Fellow Pilgrims’: Radical Protestants and Transconfessional Exchanges in Europe and the British Atlantic, c. 1670-1730,” *Church History* 83, no. 3 (2014): 595.

⁵³ Ibid., 598.

⁵⁴ Lucinda Martin, “Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn,” *Monatshefte* 95, no. 1 (2003): 34-35.

Merlau stimulated a Pietist revival in Frankfurt that galvanized the religious reform movement in its early stages.⁵⁵ Public preaching also featured among Pietist women in central Europe, often riling male religious officials in the process. Meanwhile, these women enjoyed the support and patronage of Protestant women in positions of power such as Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate.⁵⁶

Even so, dialogue and collaboration among varied Protestant sects “often could not override the devotion of dissenters to particular doctrines or practices,” a persistent problem that inspired perennial doubt in pan-Protestantism itself.⁵⁷ These dogmatic animosities even played out later in Georgia between the Salzburgers and the Moravians. Notions of Protestant solidarity and resistance to Catholic oppression still figured prominently in the rise of aid organizations in Europe, however dubious the claim to a global Protestant community might have been. The confessional rhetoric of pan-Protestant unity among the faithful could inspire action in instances of religious persecution and crisis, and at times networks of international aid even enjoyed the prominent sponsorship of Protestant heads of state.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁷ Bouldin, “In Search of ‘Fellow Pilgrims,’” 606.

Diplomacy, Protestant Charity, and German Emigration

In 1689, Parliament passed the Act of Toleration in an effort to “unite their Majesties Protestant Subjects in Interest and Affection.”⁵⁸ According to the historian Katharine Carté Engel, “William III’s allies in the Church of England...employed a flexible language that championed international Protestantism to explain and justify the new regime”⁵⁹ in opposition to the “‘popish prince’ James II,”⁶⁰ whom they had overthrown in the same year by way of the Glorious Revolution. England had begun to adopt Protestantism “as a unifying political concept,” and in doing so, “tied to the English state those individuals who could not in conscience conform to the Church of England.”⁶¹

By the early eighteenth century, much like Prussia, Great Britain had effectively become a bi-confessional government, owing to the Act of Union which had united England and Scotland in 1707. Queen Anne, as head of the Church of England, even took pains to assure her new Scottish subjects by swearing an oath to honor and uphold the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.⁶² Even a Presbyterian minister arrested in colonial New York for preaching without a

⁵⁸ Katharine Carté Engel, “Connecting Protestants in Britain’s Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Empire,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2018): 44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 44.

license in the same year cited the Act of Union in his defense, and the court ultimately decided in his favor.⁶³

By the time of the Salzburgers' expulsion, the British government also had a history of sponsoring and resettling Protestant refugees from central Europe in its colonies. The British offer to resettle the Salzburgers in North America was, therefore, not without precedent. The British government had involved itself in a similar humanitarian crisis in 1709-1711.

Throughout 1709, thousands of German-speaking migrants from the Palatinate (in what is now southwestern Germany), "hoping to escape famine, war, and poverty" in the midst of the War of the Spanish Succession, sailed up the Rhine River to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, where they desperately awaited British transport to London.⁶⁴ The evolution of this refugee crisis indicates that, by the turn of the eighteenth century, pan-Protestant ideology had become a potent tool of state propaganda for Great Britain.

In an era in which European sovereigns "viewed their populations as critical elements for the wealth of their realms," state propaganda and diplomatic rhetoric could often blur the lines between humanitarian altruism and opportunistic realpolitik.⁶⁵ Indeed, political orthodoxy in early modern Europe "posited that a large population produced more wealth and power" in a nation-state.⁶⁶ Thus, a refugee crisis could offer tantalizing prospects for improving a European government's international prestige. England in particular was especially keen on such opportunities, largely because it had "suffered a diminished population at the end of the seventeenth century even as it sought to increase its colonial empire."⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁴ Beiler, "Information Brokers and Mediators," 46.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 45.

The British diplomat in residence at the Hague, James Dayrolle, oversaw negotiations regarding the emigration of Palatine refugees from the Rhineland to colonial New York.⁶⁸ Dayrolle involved himself in nearly every step of the complicated process, obtaining permission from authorities to allow the migrants passage across political borders and arranging transportation.⁶⁹ He also successfully sought funds from Queen Anne's government in London in order to finance the journey of the Palatines from Rotterdam to London, and then across the Atlantic to New York.⁷⁰ Ultimately, most of the Palatine immigrants soon found themselves acting as a defensive buffer between New York and its French and Native American neighbors, in addition to working for the British navy by producing pitch and tar.⁷¹ The enterprise ended unfavorably; the disillusioned Palatines abandoned their New York settlement, and some even settled among the Mohawk natives in the Schoharie Valley.⁷²

These groups of refugees, whom Britons collectively labeled as "foreign Protestants," increasingly predominated in British confessional discourse. This umbrella label included myriad sects and nationalities. Huguenots from France, for instance, began to immigrate to Britain as well as to its North American colonies across the Atlantic, facilitating the rise of a significant minority of French-speaking Protestants across the British Empire.⁷³

Furthermore, evolving dynastic connections between the English monarchy and other Protestant ruling families in Europe reinforced notions of Protestant solidarity. Queen Anne's husband was none other than Prince George of Denmark, whose secretary, Heinrich Ludolf, had

⁶⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 48.

⁷¹ Ibid., 51.

⁷² Philip Otterness, "The Palatine Immigrants of 1710 and the Native Americans," in *A Peculiar Mixture: German-Language Cultures and Identities in Eighteenth-Century North America*, eds. Jan Stievermann and Oliver Scheiding (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 66.

⁷³ Engel, "Connecting Protestants in Britain's Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Empire," 47.

facilitated cooperation between the Pietists in Halle and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in London. The SPCK, as an English missionary and aid organization, would later come to play a vital role in the Salzburgers' migration to Georgia. The connection ultimately resulted in the Francke Foundations transferring Anthony Wilhelm Boehm to London, which Engel has identified in her work as "a crucial event for the development of the SPCK-Halle cooperation that lasted for decades."⁷⁴ Boehm's assistant pastor at the Savoy Church, Samuel Urlsperger, also had close ties to Halle, and he soon forged a friendship with Henry Newman, the SPCK's secretary. Urlsperger's close affiliation with the SPCK enabled him to later play a central role in securing the Salzburgers' transatlantic passage.⁷⁵

King George II himself reflected a conspicuous notion of a transnational Protestant community. While serving as head of the Church of England in his capacity as the English king, as a German-speaking Hanoverian he adhered to his Lutheran faith in his private life. His court chaplain, Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen, fatefully intervened on behalf of their German co-religionists, the Salzburgers, inspiring the king's designation of Georgia as a refuge for the migrants.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Katherine Carté Engel, "The SPCK and the American Revolution: The Limits of International Protestantism," *Church History* 81, no. 1 (2012): 86.

⁷⁵ Auman, "Germans in Georgia," 4-5.

⁷⁶ Dietmar Herz and John David Smith, "'Into Danger but also Closer to God': The Salzburgers' Voyage to Georgia, 1733-1734," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (1996): 12.

The Edict of Expulsion and the Salzburger Exodus

When Archbishop Anton Eleutherius von Firmian issued his Edict of Expulsion on October 31, 1731, he ignited a refugee crisis across Europe. The edict represented the culmination of a months-long “investigation into the moral and religious condition of Salzburg,” particularly its remote Alpine regions. While the investigation itself represented a typical inauguration of a new archbishop’s reign, Archbishop Firmian’s insistence on involving the Jesuits proved highly controversial as well as instrumental in precipitating the crisis that followed.⁷⁷

Over the prior months, events had accelerated ominously. On June 16, 1731, about 19,000 Salzburger signed a petition that implored the *corpus evangelicorum* to intervene. A month later, on July 13, a number of Salzburg’s Lutherans who were aware of talks of Imperial intervention gathered at Schwarzach to swear an oath “to defend the Lutheran faith against Catholic oppression.”⁷⁸

When Archbishop Firmian “suddenly expelled all Protestants from his principality” on October 31, 1731, the response across Protestant Europe was seismic.⁷⁹ The well-publicized controversy had already attracted state actors from regions outside of central Europe. In particular, the British government sought to bolster its emergent reputation as a defender of Protestantism across Europe and took an intense interest in the evolving crisis. Meanwhile,

⁷⁷ Walker, *The Salzburg Transaction*, 38.

⁷⁸ Herz and Smith, ““Into Danger but also Closer to God,”” 9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

contemporary Protestant propaganda readily drew parallels with the biblical exodus, likening the Salzburger to “the children of Israel on their way out of Egypt.”⁸⁰ The evangelists who responded so strongly to the event took part in a movement that had already spread across Europe and captivated Protestant audiences for the past century.

The exiled Salzburger, in leaving their ancestral homeland under duress, endured emotional trauma and physical suffering. Those without property fared the worst, as the edict mandated them to leave in little more than a week near the beginning of winter, and the harsh weather resulted in deaths along the trek, particularly among children.⁸¹ The Salzburger migrants also soon discovered that they were unwelcome newcomers in many of the Catholic lands surrounding them, since their abrupt arrival in major cities upended confessional balances and suddenly gave “some of the cities Protestant majorities.”⁸²

Amidst the rapidly escalating humanitarian crisis, King Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia famously offered to settle the Salzburger in remote East Prussia, far to the northeast in the Baltic. Over the course of the following months, Protestant evangelists “lauded the pious Prussian king whose country had become a promised land for the oppressed.”⁸³ Undoubtedly, realpolitik had at least partially informed the Prussian king’s “propaganda coup of incalculable value,” along with the boon of settling tens of thousands of new, tax-paying citizens in his depopulated eastern dominions.⁸⁴ However, the diametric notion of Protestant unity against Catholic persecution remained widespread, persistent, and sincere, and this dynamic informed the British response.

⁸⁰ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 143.

⁸¹ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 7.

⁸² Herz and Smith, ““Into Danger but also Closer to God,”” 9.

⁸³ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 143.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 142-144.

The Salzburger and the British Colonial Project in Georgia

During the Salzburger's migration across Europe, the Georgia Trustees appropriated the British monarchy's confessional rhetoric and presented themselves as defenders of Protestantism. In a 1733 petition to Parliament, the Georgia Trustees had argued that the Salzburger "and other persecuted and distressed Protestants would be glad to go and settle in...Georgia, where they may find under His Majesty's Protection an Asylum from Persecution and Arbitrary Power."⁸⁵ A later petition from the Trustees explicitly criticized "the Popish part of the Magistracy of Augsburg" for refusing to give quarter to the refugees from Salzburg in the city.⁸⁶

Perhaps with a sense of gratitude, the Salzburger may have begun to consider themselves as British subjects even before their arrival in Georgia. Upon request from the Georgia Trustees, on December 21, 1733, the Salzburger swore an oath of allegiance in their native German to King George II and the British government before their departure for Georgia from the English port of Dover. The British government, in return, "promised the full 'enjoyment of their rights and freedoms.'"⁸⁷ In tune with the British Parliament's pretensions to trans-confessional Protestantism, the Salzburger were promised "free and unencumbered land,

⁸⁵ Georgia Trustees, *The Petition of the Trustees for establishing the Colony of Georgia in America*, May 10, 1733, in "Transcripts of the Earl of Egmont Papers: Letters to Georgia, v. 14207, 1732 Octoboer-1735 May," ed. E. Merton Coulter, *Digital Library of Georgia*, 27.

⁸⁶ Georgia Trustees, *The humble Petition of the Trustees for the Colony of Georgia*, September 26, 1733, in *ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁷ Auman, "'English Liberties' and German Settlers," 37-38.

freedom to practice their religion, and all the civil rights of ‘His Majesty’s Natural Born Subjects.’”⁸⁸

Secretary Newman of the SPCK thought it necessary to explicitly outline the Georgia Trustees’ promises to the Salzburgers in a letter to Reverend Urlsperger in Augsburg. As a prominent German Lutheran and sponsor of the Salzburgers, Urlsperger insisted that the Salzburgers’ religious rights as Protestants be affirmed in writing by the British government.⁸⁹ Quoting the Georgia Trustees directly, Newman emphatically assured Urlsperger that the Salzburgers would not only have “‘a Pious able Protestant Minister to preach to ‘em in their own Language...at the Charge of the Trustees of Georgia,’” but that they would be entitled to “‘all the Civil and Religious Rights of Free Subjects of Great-Britain.’”⁹⁰

Newman persisted in promoting Georgia as an ideal new home for the exiled Lutherans of Salzburg. In a 1732 letter, Newman wrote to Urlsperger that the British offer to settle the refugees in Georgia was “‘a Proposition made of so much Consequence for the Relief of our Persecuted Brethren.” Newman voiced the SPCK’s “‘earnest desire...that some of these Exiles may become His Majesty’s in Georgia,” and proceeded to include rosy descriptions of “‘a Temperate Climate, capable of a vast variety of Productions fit for the Benefit of Trade and Comfort of Life.” He further assured the reverend that Georgia possessed “‘all Materials to prepare the Country for the Reception of any indigent distressed Protestants that may be disposed to follow [the Salzburgers] from hence or any other Part of the World.”⁹¹ In the course of this epistolary exchange, Urlsperger vindicated the British government’s pan-Protestant self-

⁸⁸ Ibid., 39.

⁸⁹ Auman, “‘English Liberties’ and German Settlers,” 38.

⁹⁰ Henry Newman to Samuel Urlsperger, December 28, 1732, in *Henry Newman’s Salzburger Letterbooks*, ed. George Fenwick Jones (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966), 36.

⁹¹ Newman to Urlsperger, November 21, 1732, in *ibid.*, 31.

promotion when he exulted to Newman in 1732 that “you can hardly believe what great Joy the Charity of the English Nation towards the Persecuted Protestants hath Raised amongst us.”⁹²

In his letters, Newman increasingly portrayed Georgia as a refuge for Protestants universally, seldom referencing any particular sect. In a 1735 letter to Baron Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck, a Hanoverian nobleman and a close associate of the SPCK as well as of the Salzburgers, Newman praised von Reck for “returning to England with a Transport of Protestant Sufferers for the Sake of Religion.”⁹³ Newman echoed the confessional rhetoric of the British government in another letter to von Reck when he lamented “the tyrannical Oppressions of the Romish Clergy to those Excellent Persons who dare to suffer Persecution for the sake of Conscience.”⁹⁴ He even evoked contemporary Protestant propaganda across Europe that portrayed the Salzburgers as “the children of Israel on their way out of Egypt”⁹⁵ when he lauded von Reck for leading “those Confessors...to the Wilderness of America,” a poignant allusion to the biblical Exodus.⁹⁶

Newman’s letters and those of his correspondents at times reveal the intricate confessional networks and alignments that existed across the European continent. In a 1733 letter to Urlsperger, Newman exulted that “the influence of the Protestant Powers in Europe is at present so great” and expressed the hope that “God will incline their Hearts to make a right use of that Influence.”⁹⁷ Urlsperger shared similar sentiments, expressing his gratitude in an earlier letter to Newman for the two thousand florins that the Swedish and Danish ambassadors to the

⁹² Urlsperger to Newman, November 10, 1732, in *ibid.*, 272.

⁹³ Newman to Philip von Reck, September 9, 1735, in *ibid.*, 172.

⁹⁴ Newman to von Reck, January 27, 1735/6, in *ibid.*, 185.

⁹⁵ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 143.

⁹⁶ Newman to von Reck, January 27, 1735/6, in *Salzburger Letterbooks*, 185.

⁹⁷ Newman to Urlsperger, December 4, 1733, in *ibid.*, 76.

Holy Roman Empire had donated to the Salzburgers.⁹⁸ Perhaps the ambassadors' donations at least partially satisfied Newman's hopes that the Protestant nations of Europe would unite in common cause on behalf of the Salzburgers.

In contradiction to confessional propaganda, however, relations between non-belligerent Protestant and Catholic states in Europe remained cordial and interdependent, even amidst the Salzburgers' highly polemicized migration across the continent. In a 1732 letter to Newman, Urlsperger included a laudatory tribute from the Dutch foreign minister in residence at Regensburg, in which the Dutch minister praised "His most Serene Highness the Arch Bishop of Salzburg" for "most Graciously" permitting the Salzburgers to depart their homeland for Protestant safe havens elsewhere. He also praised the Catholic Elector of Bavaria for granting "a most Gracious Permission" for the Salzburgers "to Pass upon the Danube" in the course of their journey.⁹⁹ Such tributes highlight the uncomfortable, though commonplace, truth that political realities often necessitated inconsistencies in European confessional politics.

Unlike Prussia, whose pan-Protestant authority was primarily regional in nature, confined to German-speaking central Europe and the Holy Roman Empire, Great Britain's religious policies and rhetoric carried profound implications for its colonies across the Atlantic. Moreover, such rhetoric explicitly placed the British Empire in principled opposition to the vast Catholic empires of Spain and France. The British Empire had assumed a Protestant ideology of global dimensions.

⁹⁸ Urlsperger to Newman, August 25, 1732, in *ibid.*, 237.

⁹⁹ LS Gallieris to Minister of the Elector of Bavaria and Bishop of Passau, November 1732, in *ibid.*, 274.

Ebenezer as a Protestant Community

In March of 1734, Johann Martin Boltzius waited in anticipation with his faithful followers, the refugees from Salzburg, onboard the *Purrysburg*. After sailing up the Rhine to Amsterdam, crossing the North Sea to London, and then sailing to the English port city of Dover, the Salzburgers had embarked upon the vast and terrifying waters of the Atlantic. At long last, Boltzius's congregation could see the green shoreline of Georgia careen in and out of view as the ocean's waves rocked the ship. As they drew nearer to shore, the migrants may have noticed with awe the expansive and vibrant greenery. Boltzius looked forward to seeing for himself this "fine Land" that Secretary Newman had promoted.¹⁰⁰ As he led his congregation in prayer onboard, thanking God for delivering them unto this new country, Boltzius must have envisioned their future settlement as a bountiful Eden. It is just as likely that the landscape soon inspired reservations.

The humid and stifling heat of Savannah's subtropical summer was thankfully absent in the early spring, yet as their vessel cautiously navigated the shallow waters of the Savannah River, the terrain seemed less than promising. Stagnant swamps and wetlands dominated his view, boding ill for any would-be farmers. While rice cultivation thrived in neighboring South Carolina, enslaved Africans performed the brutal, back-breaking labor which made that agricultural prosperity possible; the Trustees had outlawed slavery in the Georgia colony. Crops familiar to natives of central Europe, such as wheat and barley, could not grow in this inundated

¹⁰⁰ Newman to Urlsperger, November 21, 1732, in *ibid.*, 31.

environment. Many of the Salzburgers onboard the *Purrysburg* were not even farmers, but miners from Salzburg's Alpine mountains, and there were no soaring peaks to be seen along the Georgia coast.¹⁰¹

Perhaps the shocking foreignness of their new homeland began to worryingly contradict the Salzburgers' utopian notions of their promised land in Georgia. They sailed along the river with little trouble at first, though their ship soon struck a sandbar, a common and crippling problem for early Savannah's shipping and trade industries. The crew addressed the hindrance by unloading the ship's barrels of drinking water that had sustained them over the course of their months-long transatlantic journey. The following night, "an unusually high tide" freed the ship, a development that Boltzius attributed to divine intervention.¹⁰² Despite such small, promising turns of fortune, the Salzburgers' first year of settlement would prove to be a deadly test of their faith.

After their initial arrival at the port of Savannah, persistent hardships stymied the Salzburgers' progress. Upon reaching the tributary of Ebenezer Creek, the Salzburgers found themselves trapped at the small village of Abercorn. The creek was too shallow and strewn with debris to go any further. Still eight miles away from their destination, and with no other choice but to drag their supplies and provisions overland, the Salzburgers cleared a trail, built several bridges, and improvised some sledges for their small team of horses.¹⁰³ Though they proved

¹⁰¹ James Van Horn Melton, "From Alpine Miner to Low-Country Yeoman: The Transatlantic Worlds of a Georgia Salzburger 1693-1761," *Past & Present*, no. 201 (2008).

¹⁰² Samuel Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports of the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America...Edited by Samuel Urlsperger: Volume One, 1733-1734*, ed. George Fenwick Jones, trans. Hermann J. Lacher (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1968), 58-59.

¹⁰³ Jones, *The Georgia Dutch*, 38.

resourceful in overcoming this initial setback, the hostility of the natural environment was a harbinger of hardships to come.

In its formative years, Ebenezer suffered. Lethal cases of dysentery, malaria, and malnutrition pepper Boltzius's early accounts of the young settlement. During the summer of 1734, "a young woman with a very bad case of dysentery" begged Boltzius to acquire medicine for her.¹⁰⁴ This request, along with mounting cases of scurvy in the Ebenezer community, prompted Boltzius to send some Salzburger on a desperate trip to Savannah for medical supplies and home remedies.¹⁰⁵

Despite these early hardships, Boltzius claimed that some Englishmen envied the Salzburger's devout community. In early 1735, Boltzius noted that an English pastor, Mr. Vollerton, visited Ebenezer en route to Charleston and marveled at the Salzburger's education of their children. According to Boltzius, Vollerton expressed his wish "that some arrangements would be made for the good of the English children in this colony which for the most part grow up wild and in disorder."¹⁰⁶ However, Boltzius's later observations in 1738 suggest that English prejudice against German indentured servants persisted. Since some Englishmen complained of the "loose behavior" of these German servants while also assuming that they belonged to Boltzius's congregation, the reverend stressed that he had "been desirous of admitting to our assemblies none but orderly people who accept the word of God and conduct themselves in a righteous way."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Ursperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Two, 1734-1735*, ed. George Fenwick Jones, trans. Hermann J. Lacher (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel Ursperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Five, 1738*, eds. and trans. George Fenwick Jones and Renate Wilson (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980), 224.

Meanwhile, the difficulties of frontier life provoked serious disagreements within Ebenezer itself. Boltzius stirred controversy with some settlers, particularly with Mrs. Rheinlaender, when he authorized the lay baptism of a dying infant that he could not personally baptize himself in the moment. While Boltzius “commended [the layman] for the act,” Mrs. Rheinlaender insisted “against the efficacy of lay baptism.”¹⁰⁸ In this instance, Mrs. Rheinlaender engaged with an already rich legacy of reformist activism among women within the Pietist movement.¹⁰⁹

The high mortality rates also resulted in widows, including Dorothea Helfenstein, who “had a mind of her own and dared to dispute with Boltzius on ministerial matters.”¹¹⁰ Boltzius’s emphasis on women’s obedience to their husbands was of particular concern. The hardships of life in Ebenezer required that all settlers, men and women alike, work for the settlement’s survival, and this reality likely contributed to women’s increasingly assertive roles. Several women, including wives of living schoolmasters, shoemakers, and carpenters, received criticism from Boltzius for being too assertive and independent in their marriages.¹¹¹ As Ebenezer struggled to maintain a steady population in its early years, Boltzius could not seriously discipline these women, much less expel them, without jeopardizing popular confidence in his leadership.

Ebenezer’s endurance over the following years was all the more impressive due to the unfavorable natural environment. The Salzburgers soon adopted cattle raising and kept their livestock “in herds under the care of paid herdsmen,” in contrast to most Englishmen in Georgia

¹⁰⁸ Jones, *The Georgia Dutch*, 126.

¹⁰⁹ See Lucinda Martin, “Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism.”

¹¹⁰ Jones, *The Georgia Dutch*, 126.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

who typically “allowed their cattle to run wild.” This method of cattle raising protected their livestock more reliably from attacks from local wildlife.¹¹² In addition, regular supply runs to Savannah, at times taken by Boltzius himself, helped the Salzburger subsist while they struggled to discover a crop to grow.

During one of his supply runs on a sweltering July day in 1738, Boltzius invited the Anglican minister George Whitefield to accompany him on his journey back to Ebenezer. Aiming to establish an orphanage in Georgia as part of his religious mission to the frontier colony, Whitefield wished to see the Salzburger’s orphanage and make some instructive observations. The visit apparently made an impression. Whitefield donated substantial supplies to the orphanage, including “stockings, hats, ribbons, knives, spoons, tin pots, [and] bonnets for boys and girls.”¹¹³ While touring the orphanage, Whitefield took diligent notes, and Boltzius noted approvingly that “he voluntarily promised to look out for us as he does for his own congregation.”¹¹⁴

The relationship between Boltzius and Whitefield strengthened over subsequent years. In January 1740, Boltzius met with Whitefield again upon the latter’s return to Savannah. Unfortunately, Whitefield had begun to encounter financial difficulties in his endeavor to build his own orphanage in Savannah. Nevertheless, Whitefield entrusted Boltzius with substantial supplies for the orphanage, which remained under construction. These included essentials such as beef, flour, butter, and various clothing products. He also requested that Boltzius write to his

¹¹² Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 41.

¹¹³ Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Five, 1738*, 152-153.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

correspondents in England to dispel rumors of corruption, a request that Boltzius promptly executed.¹¹⁵

These rumors had arisen through Whitefield's disagreements with the Georgia Trustees. The minister's evangelistic forays into enslaved and planter communities in neighboring South Carolina were only the beginning of his fractious relationship with the Trustees; they also balked at Whitefield's insistence that he ought to enjoy independence in his management of the orphanage in Savannah, which stood on land that the Trustees claimed was theirs.¹¹⁶ The intimate collaboration between Whitefield and Boltzius indicates the important role that Boltzius played as a mediator for Whitefield both within Georgia as well as across transatlantic networks of correspondence. The fact that Whitefield thought it necessary to enlist Boltzius's aid in his defense suggests the clout that the German Pietist minister had come to wield in Georgia society after only a few years in the fledgling colony.

At least part of Boltzius's apparently powerful influence may be attributed to the prominence of the Salzburgers in the minds of the Georgia Trustees. Harman Verelst, the Trustees' accountant, praised Whitefield directly in a 1740 letter for raising funds for the Salzburgers' orphanage and urged him to consult directly with the Salzburgers as to how the funds may be applied. Verelst also mentioned William Stephens, the Trustees' secretary, who he hoped would assist Whitefield "in Representing such Industrious and proper Objects in Georgia as are most deserving of Relief."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Samuel Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Seven, 1740*, eds. and trans. George Fenwick Jones and Don Savelle (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 17-19.

¹¹⁶ John Howard Smith, *The First Great Awakening: Redefining Religion in British America, 1725-1775* (Lanham: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015), 122-123.

¹¹⁷ Harman Verelst to George Whitefield, April 24, 1740, in "Transcripts of the Earl of Egmont Papers: Letters to Georgia, v. 14210, 1739 April-1740 June," ed. E. Merton Coulter, *Digital Library of Georgia*, 204.

Verelst's insistence that Whitefield consult the Salzburgers in the application of funds also suggests that the Trustees respected them enough to entrust them with the self-government of their community at Ebenezer; the Salzburgers themselves would know best how to apply the funds, and apparently did not require the moral guidance of the English. Clearly, the Trustees' vision of Georgia as a charitable colony that offered refuge to the destitute as well as to persecuted Protestants remained very much alive.

Boltzius's leadership role also owed itself to the reality that Whitefield was not an officially ordained minister. It was on these grounds that in 1738, a pious Englishman received Communion not from Whitefield, but from Boltzius.¹¹⁸ Boltzius even sought to hire an English instructor for the orphanage at Ebenezer, indicating his initiative to integrate his German-speaking community within the colony.¹¹⁹

These developments reflect the respect that the Trustees and the Salzburgers possessed for one another. Boltzius undoubtedly played a pivotal role in this relationship, owing to his close connections to prominent figures such as George II's Lutheran court chaplain, Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen. Boltzius had, in fact, successfully petitioned Ziegenhagen directly for funding for his new personal residence in Ebenezer, as he gratefully recalled in a 1739 letter.¹²⁰ Ziegenhagen had also assisted in the donation of books to "the German people in Savannah," which Boltzius praised in his journal.¹²¹ The court chaplain also thought it necessary to report to Boltzius directly on the status of new immigrants who had arrived in Holland and awaited

¹¹⁸ Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Five, 1738*, 224.

¹¹⁹ Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Two, 1734-1735*, 37.

¹²⁰ Boltzius to James Vernon, July 19, 1739, in "Transcripts of the Earl of Egmont Papers: Letters from Georgia, v. 14204, 1739 June-1740 June," ed. E. Merton Coulter, *Digital Library of Georgia*, 11-12.

¹²¹ Samuel Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Six, 1739*, eds. and trans. George Fenwick Jones and Renate Wilson (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1981), 82.

transport on their way to settle in Ebenezer.¹²² Boltzius's correspondence with such high-ranking officials in London suggests a significant degree of social prominence and influence among Great Britain's elite.

His relationship with Secretary Newman of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge also enhanced Boltzius's standing among the British, given the Society's intimate connections with the Trustees as well as the British government. Throughout the Salzburgers' initial settlement in Georgia and afterwards, Boltzius maintained steady correspondence with Newman, and the latter had updated him on the well-being of prominent public figures such as Chaplain Ziegenhagen and General Oglethorpe.¹²³ The SPCK also paid Boltzius's salary, and Newman informed him in early 1736 when the Society had graciously determined, apparently unanimously, "to add ten pounds sterling" to his salary.¹²⁴ Occasionally, General Oglethorpe himself delivered the salaries of the Salzburgers' chief ministers upon his return to Georgia from London.¹²⁵ Considering these dynamics, it's little wonder that Whitefield sought Boltzius's endorsement when doubts about the former's integrity arose.

Such collaboration among Protestant sects in Georgia builds a seemingly compelling case for pan-Protestantism's strength in North America. In fact, however, the reality was more complicated. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the bitter disagreements between the Pietists and Moravians in Georgia.

¹²² Ibid., 126.

¹²³ Ursperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Two, 1734-1735*, 214.

¹²⁴ Samuel Ursperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Three, 1736*, eds. and trans. George Fenwick Jones and Marie Hahn (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 37-38.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 208.

The Questionable Viability of Pan-Protestantism

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, the SPCK strove to cultivate a Protestantism that “transcended kingdoms and empires.”¹²⁶ Moreover, the Society harbored the grand ambition “to raise the level of Christian devotion throughout the Protestant world.”¹²⁷ Their various missionary projects across the globe, as well as their close collaboration with non-English Protestants, reflect this initiative. Indeed, the reality that “members corresponded with religious reformers in places like Muscovy, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany” betrays the notion of a pan-Protestant mission across Europe.¹²⁸ Given the rich correspondence between Secretary Newman and Reverend Urlsperger, as well as the intimate diplomatic and dynastic connections between Great Britain and other Protestant states across Europe, such associations cannot be dismissed as confessional propaganda.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, the ethos of pan-Protestant solidarity had its limits.

The leader of the Moravians in Europe, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, had allied himself earlier with German Pietists by defending them against persecution in Silesia, and he had even studied under Pietist theologians at Halle.¹³⁰ Early on, however, Zinzendorf aroused suspicions among the Jesuits in central Europe that he, in fact, preached a radical denomination of Christianity not protected under the terms of the Peace of Westphalia.¹³¹ The Jesuits based

¹²⁶ Auman, “‘English Liberties’ and German Settlers,” 40.

¹²⁷ Engel, “The SPCK and the American Revolution,” 84.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹³⁰ W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 120-121.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

these suspicions in part on Zinzendorf's philosophy regarding conversion, and this controversy later emerged as one of the points of contention with Halle as well.

According to Zinzendorf, an individual had converted "as soon as he had received the forgiveness of sins, and showed evidence of the fact in heart and life."¹³² Halle swiftly condemned this so-called "quick" avenue of conversion, and with August Gottlieb Spangenberg's rise in prominence as "Zinzendorf's right-hand man," the controversy only continued to brew.¹³³ Spangenberg had joined Halle at the height of the Moravians' influence with Denmark, a powerful ally of Halle. However, only a year into his tenure, the Moravians' notions of conversion fueled doubts about Spangenberg's probity and rumors regarding his alleged practices of "love-feasts and foot-washing."¹³⁴

The Pietists made their disagreements with the Moravians starkest in 1733 when Halle "condemned and expelled" Spangenberg.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, Zinzendorf had stimulated revivals across Europe, from Upper Lusatia to the Baltic regions of Reval, Livonia, and Latvia.¹³⁶ In contrast to the controversial Moravian revival, Pietism, which "had begun as a controversial movement with a precarious foothold in the established Lutheran churches," had, by the 1720s and 1730s, taken a conservative turn; this evolution was especially pronounced in Prussia, owing to Pietist leaders' close collaboration with the monarchy.¹³⁷ For instance, when Zinzendorf attempted to distribute controversial Moravian Bibles to the Salzburger emigrants in Nuremberg, local Lutheran officials confiscated the Bibles immediately.¹³⁸ In Pietist communities such as

¹³² Ibid., 138.

¹³³ Ibid., 139.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 140.

¹³⁵ Aaron Spencer Fogleman, "Shadow Boxing in Georgia: The Beginnings of the Moravian-Lutheran Conflict in British North America," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 83, no. 4 (1999): 630.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 636.

¹³⁷ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 135.

¹³⁸ Fogleman, "Shadow Boxing in Georgia," 639.

the Salzburger's settlement of Ebenezer in Georgia, congregations were to be "directed by properly trained and ordained ministers who understood the gospel and the proper religious texts and ideas of the recent Pietist movement."¹³⁹ The Lutheran Pietist spiritual leaders refused to tolerate what they considered to be the heresy of the Moravians.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, the Pietists regularly accused the Moravians of having become "corrupted by female leadership," as well as of engaging in sexual deviancy and of abusing captive women and children within their congregations.¹⁴¹ Boltzius went so far as to brand the Moravians as "very sly and hypocritical separatists."¹⁴² In a marginally tamer letter to Secretary Newman, he recalled from his time in Halle that Zinzendorf's "new notions were then very much disliked [by] every one that loves truth, peace and the Conservation of our holy doctrine."¹⁴³

The Pietists' prejudice against the Moravians was not unique. By the 1730s, the Moravians had garnered a reputation for flouting Protestant orthodoxy. For one, they emphasized the role of Jesus in the Holy Trinity at the expense of God the Father, even going so far as to refer to Christ as Jehovah or the Creator. This controversial notion of Christ's identity and nature not only permeated Moravian sermons, but their hymns as well, effectively inculcating such ideas among the laity.¹⁴⁴ The Moravians also feminized the Holy Spirit in their sermons and hymns, often portraying the Spirit as the mother of the Trinity.¹⁴⁵ Spangenberg himself aggressively defended these ideas in print, which contributed to his growing alienation

¹³⁹ Ibid., 645.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 645.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 647.

¹⁴² Ibid., 647.

¹⁴³ Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau to Newman, April 2, 1735, in *Henry Newman's Salzburger Letterbooks*, 584.

¹⁴⁴ Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 74.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 75.

from the Halle Pietists.¹⁴⁶ He and his mentor, Zinzendorf, rationalized the Holy Spirit's feminization in that its gender was merely metaphorical, not biological, but to many Protestants, this desecration of the Holy Spirit's sacred identity was nothing short of blasphemous.¹⁴⁷

Boltzius's accusations of sexual deviancy within the Moravian Church may also partially have roots in Moravians' reputation for sensualizing Christians' relationship with Christ. Zinzendorf, for instance, equated Jesus' wound in his side to a womb that gave birth to the feminine Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁸ In addition to emphasizing Jesus' "motherly female qualities," Moravians also celebrated the "erotic qualities to their relationship with the Savior."¹⁴⁹ Moravian hymns even went so far as to express yearning to be "entirely inside" Jesus' "most dear little side hole."¹⁵⁰ This metaphorical sensualizing of Christ, and in particular its prevalence in widely known hymns, could potentially have had the effect of normalizing homoerotic relations among the laity. Fogleman cites evidence of intimate same-sex relations among women and young men in Moravian communities, while Zinzendorf himself expressed concern that "opposite- and same-sex kissing as a Christian greeting were becoming too passionate during services."¹⁵¹ Charges of sexual libertinism in the Moravian Church, while certainly hyperbolic, appear to have been not entirely divorced from reality.

The English evangelist John Wesley had a much more positive impression of the Moravians' faith. While traveling across the Atlantic with them, Wesley began to learn German in order to communicate with the congregation. According to Wesley, one of the Moravians'

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 74-76.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 76.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 77.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 78. Here, Fogleman is directly quoting Hymn 2281 from the *Moravian Hymnal*.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 79.

bishops, David Nitschmann, began to teach himself English, prompting Wesley to exclaim in his journal, “O may we be, not only of one Tongue, but of one Mind and one Heart!”¹⁵² Wesley also wrote approvingly of Spangenberg’s sermons; considering that Spangenberg had been expelled from Halle for his theological differences with the Pietists, Wesley’s approval is notable.¹⁵³ Wesley went further to exult that God “hath opened me a Door into the whole Moravian Church.”¹⁵⁴

Zinzendorf himself “distrusted scholarship in favour of experience.”¹⁵⁵ In this prioritization of religious passion over biblical study, the Moravians shared a sentiment with Wesley, the Halle Pietists, and other evangelicals. Wesley in particular needed “emotionally to *know* the ‘constant peace’” of salvation; he even went so far as to make a religious pilgrimage to Herrnhut itself, the birthplace of the Moravian revival, in 1738.¹⁵⁶ In Georgia, Wesley recommended several reforms to Spangenberg, who led the Moravian community there. Wesley’s proposed reforms included observing fast days and reciting the Lord’s Prayer “at every public meeting.”¹⁵⁷

However, he soon abandoned what he considered to be the mysticism of the Moravians, even alleging that they regarded “not the ancients but the modern mystics as the best interpreters of Scripture.”¹⁵⁸ In addition, Wesley’s “High Churchmanship was incompatible with the

¹⁵² John Wesley, “An extract of the Rev. John Wesley’s journal from his embarking for Georgia to his return to London...1735/1738,” *Digital Library of Georgia*, 2.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 104.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 125-127. Emphasis original.

¹⁵⁷ Geordan Hammond, “Versions of Primitive Christianity: John Wesley’s Relations with the Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1737,” *Journal of Moravian History*, no. 6 (2009): 43-44.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 129.

Moravians' democratization of the ministerial office."¹⁵⁹ His views on episcopacy even influenced his relations with Boltzius, to whom he refused to administer Communion "since he was neither baptized nor ordained by a bishop who stood in the apostolic succession."¹⁶⁰ Even so, Wesley's brief and intense interest with Moravian theology demonstrates how Protestant evangelicalism could often transcend national and ethnic boundaries, however temporary those crossings may have been.

The harsh economic realities of daily life in early Georgia could supersede religious disagreements, and the laity seem to have often dismissed the misgivings of their spiritual leaders. In 1737, Boltzius noted approvingly that the Rheinlaender family in Ebenezer had ended their son's apprenticeship to a Moravian cobbler in Savannah. While the father claimed that the decision was merely due to the cobbler's poor instruction, Boltzius speculated that the Moravians "would have caused much disgust and repulsion in the boy with their slanderous remarks regarding the preachers at Ebenezer."¹⁶¹ When a Salzburger woman, Mrs. Helfenstein, approved of her own son's apprenticeship to the same cobbler for three years, Boltzius had no shortage of venomous words for the boy, claiming that he was "not worth much" anyhow, and that he had "bad habits and manners."¹⁶²

Such ordinary interactions between Moravians and Salzburgers, adherents to two quite different Protestant faiths, might appear to be a victory for pan-Protestantism. However, any indication of normative relations among those of differing confessions could arouse the ire of

¹⁵⁹ Hammond, "Versions of Primitive Christianity," 48.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶¹ Samuel Urlsperger, *Detailed Reports: Volume Four, 1737*, eds. and trans. George Fenwick Jones and Renate Wilson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 14. Jones and Wilson note that Boltzius provides no evidence for his "paranoic fear" of the Moravians' slander.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 15.

suspicious and intolerant spiritual leaders such as Boltzius. Heated disagreements among Protestant sects thus hampered the ability of orthodox theologians to present an image of unity among Protestants. The ugly rift between the Moravians and the Halle Pietists was especially public, given the Moravian leaders' previous affiliation with the Francke Foundations.

Perhaps more crucially, these conflicts reflected Protestant evangelicalism's early reliance on official endorsements and support from conservative theological and governmental institutions. Unlike the Moravians, the Pietists had entrenched themselves within the government of a preeminent German Protestant state (i.e., Prussia) and had long-standing connections with English missionary organizations such as the SPCK. Ironically, eighteenth-century pan-Protestant ideology demanded conformity to institutions and theologies originally borne of radical departures from Protestant orthodoxy.

Conclusion: The Mixed Legacies of Pan-Protestant Aspirations

The SPCK's close coordination with the Halle Pietists in the emigration of the Salzburger represented a unique moment in the history of European Protestantism. An officially Anglican missionary organization in London had collaborated with Halle in facilitating and sponsoring the mass exodus of German-speaking Lutheran Pietists to Georgia. Such "delicate denominational and political alliances" defined the diplomatic realities of pan-Protestantism in eighteenth-century Europe.¹⁶³

Upon its establishment, the Salzburger's settlement of Ebenezer in Georgia represented "an attempt to replicate Pietist social institutions and community patterns on American soil."¹⁶⁴ However, in the following decades, the fervor of pan-Protestant sentiment waned, along with the influence and reach of the Francke Foundations in Halle. The War of the Austrian Succession, along with the accession of the secularist Friedrich II to the Prussian throne in 1740, deprived the Pietist institutions in Halle of crucial funding and governmental support for their missionary ventures.¹⁶⁵

For a brief historical moment, Ebenezer represented Protestant ambitions for unity, yet Ebenezer itself failed to outlast the eighteenth century. Already in decline by 1760, the upheaval of the American Revolution sealed the town's doomed fate.¹⁶⁶ The town had changed hands

¹⁶³ Renate Wilson, "Public Works and Piety in Ebenezer: The Missing Salzburger Diaries of 1744-1745," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (1993): 338.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 344.

¹⁶⁶ Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys*, 10.

several times during the revolution, and in that conflict's aftermath, plundered farms and scorched earth greeted the Salzburgers who returned.¹⁶⁷ Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, German settlers had left Georgia for larger, more prosperous German communities such as those in Pennsylvania. By 1790, Georgia's already small population of ethnic Germans had become even more miniscule.¹⁶⁸

In this context, Ebenezer owes its significance to what it represented rather than what it accomplished. The town reflected several significant developments: the fruition of decades of sustained collaboration between Halle and the SPCK; European Protestants' ambitions to form a united front against Catholicism in the wake of Archbishop Firmian's Edict of Expulsion; non-English Protestants' participation in Great Britain's colonization of North America; and the persistent conflicts among Protestant sects that thwarted pan-Protestantism's ambitions. Ebenezer's fate also mirrored that of the pan-Protestant dream. European Protestants' hopes for a transnational union based on a shared faith ultimately failed to materialize, and yet the intricate webs of Protestant collaboration that gave rise to Ebenezer reflect a glimmer of achievement for pan-Protestantism's lofty aspirations.

¹⁶⁷ Jones, *The Salzburger Saga*, 126-131.

¹⁶⁸ Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys*, 11. Fogleman states that "by 1790 no Georgia county was as much as 5 percent ethnic German."

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